

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- 1) A method of allowing a user to obtain a service using a processing system, the method utilising components each component corresponding to a respective service portion provided by a respective entity, the method including causing the processing system to:
 - 5 a) Determine a combination of components in accordance with input commands received from the user, the defined component combination defining a sequence of service portions; and,
 - b) Implement the components in accordance with the component combination, thereby causing the sequence of service portions to be performed, such that the desired service is performed.
- 2) A method according to claim 1, the processing system including a base station coupled to one or more end stations via a communications network, the method including allowing the user to use the end station to:
 - 10 a) Select one or more of the components; and,
 - b) Define a component combination using the selected components.
- 3) A method according to claim 2, the method including causing the base station to:
 - 15 a) Receive a component request from the end station;
 - b) Transfer an indication of one or more components to the end station in accordance with the request, thereby allowing the user to select one or more of the components.
- 4) A method according to claim 3, the method including causing the base station to:
 - 20 a) Receive a component selection from the end station, the component selection indicating one or more selected components; and,
 - b) Transfer details of the selected components to the end station in response to the request, thereby allowing the user to define the component combination.
- 5) A method according to claim 2, the base station including a store for storing component specifications representing the service portion provided by a respective component and, a processor, the method including causing the processor to:
 - 25 a) Access the component specifications stored in the store; and,
 - b) Provide an indication of the services provided by the components to the end station, thereby allowing the user to select respective ones of the components.
- 6) A method according to claim 5, at least some of the components including one or more ports, the store being further adapted to store port specifications, each port specification indicating any information to be received by or output from the port, the method including causing the processor to:
 - 30 a) Access the port specifications stored in the store; and,
 - b) Provide an indication of the information to the end station, thereby allowing the user to select the components.

- 59 -

- 7) A method according to claim 6, the method including allowing the user to define the component combination by connecting the ports of the selected components using the end station.
- 8) A method according to claim 7, the method including connecting the ports in accordance with the port information defined in the port specifications.
- 5 9) A method according to any one of the claims 4 to 8, the method including causing the base station and/or the end station to:
 - a) Generate a graphical representation of the selected components; and,
 - b) Manipulate the graphical representation in response to input commands received from the user to thereby define the component combination.
- 10 10) A method according to claim 9, the method further including causing the base station to:
 - a) Obtain a graphical representation of the selected components;
 - b) Transfer the graphical representations to the end station.
- 11) A method according to claim 10, the method including causing the base station and end station to implement the combined components in accordance with the generated graphical representation.
- 15 12) A method according to any one of the claims 2 to 11, the components being implemented by component processing systems, the method of implementing the combined components including:
 - a) Generating a service request for each component in the component combination; and,
 - b) Transferring the service request to each entity via the communications network, each entity being adapted to respond to the service request to implement the data manipulation embodied by the
- 20 13) A method according to claim 12, the method including:
 - a) Determining any information required by the components; and,
 - b) Providing the information in the service request.
- 25 14) A method according to claim 12 or claim 13, each service request including an indication of the interconnections for each of the ports of the respective component.
- 15) A method according to claim 14, the method including causing each component processing system to:
 - a) Implement one or more respective component instances in accordance with the received service request; and,
 - b) Cause each component instance to:
 - 30 i) Interact with other components in accordance with the interconnections defined in the service request; and,
 - ii) Perform any required information manipulations.
- 16) A method according to claim 14 or claim 15, the method including causing each component processing system to:

- 60 -

- a) Implement a respective agent associated with each port; and,
 - b) Cause each agent to cooperate with an agent of another component in accordance with the defined interconnections, to thereby allow data to be transferred between the ports.
- 5 17) A method according to any one of the claims 1 to 15, at least some of the services being adapted to manipulate information, the entity being adapted to perform the service by:
- a) Receiving the information to be manipulated at a ports;
 - b) Perform the manipulation; and,
 - c) Provide the manipulated information at one of the ports.
- 10 18) A method according to claim 17, the method including transferring the manipulated information to one or more components in accordance with the defined component combination.
- 19) A method according to claim 1, the method including causing the base station to:
- a) Determine performance information, the performance information being representative of one or more criteria regarding the implementation of the components by the respective entities;
 - b) Provide the performance information to the user, the user selecting the components in accordance with the performance information.
- 15 20) A method according to claim 19, the performance information including at least one of:
- a) An indication of the entity implementing the component;
 - b) An indication of the geographical location of the entity;
 - c) An indication of the duration for implementing the component;
 - d) An indication of a cost associated with implementing the respective component; and,
 - e) A rating, the rating being indicative of the success of the component.
- 20 21) A method according to claim 19, the method including:
- a) Providing a number of different components for performing equivalent service portions, the different components being provided by different entities; and,
 - b) Inducing competition between the entities to thereby drive improvement of the components.
- 25 22) A method according to claim 1, the method including generating revenue by charging a fee for the use of each component.
- 23) A method according to claim 22, the method including:
- a) Providing at least some of the revenue to the entity implementing the respective component; and,
 - b) Having an operator of the base station retain at least some of the revenue.
- 30 24) A system for allowing a user to obtain a service, the service being implemented using components, each component corresponding to a respective service portion provided by a respective entity, the system including a processing system adapted to:

- a) Determine a combination of components in accordance with input commands received from the user, the defined component combination defining a sequence of service portions; and,
 - b) Implement the components in accordance with the component combination, thereby causing the sequence of service portions to be performed, such that the desired service to be performed.
- 5 25) A system according to claim 24, the system including a base station coupled to one or more end stations via a communications network, the base station and end stations being adapted to cooperate to perform the method of any one of the claims 1 to 23.
- 10 26) A computer program product for allowing a user to obtain a service, the service being implemented using components, each component corresponding to a respective service portion provided by a respective entity, the computer program product including computer executable code which when executed on a suitable processing system causes the processing system to perform the method of an one of the claims 1 to 23.
- 15 27) A method of allowing users to manipulate data, the method including:
- a) Providing details of a number of components, each component representing a respective service portion implemented by a respective entity;
 - b) Allowing users to define a component combination defining a sequence of service portions; and,
 - c) Causing the service portions to be defined in accordance with the defined combination.
- 20 28) A method according to claim 27, the method including:
- a) For each component, receive a component specification from a respective entity; and,
 - b) Provide details of one or more components to the user in response to a request, thereby allowing the user to request implementation of the one or more components, the details being determined from the specification.
- 25 29) A method according to claim 27, the method including causing the processing system to::
- a) Determine performance information, the performance information being representative of one or more criteria regarding the implementation of the components;
 - b) Provide the performance information to a user, the user selecting the components in accordance with the performance information.
- 30 30) A method according to claim 29, the performance information including at least one of:
- a) An indication of the entity implementing the component;
 - b) An indication of the geographical location of the entity;
 - c) An indication of the duration for implementing the component;
 - d) An indication of a cost associated with implementing the respective component; and,
 - e) A rating, the rating being indicative of the success of the component.
- 31) A method according to claim 29 or claim 30, the method including:

- 62 -

- a) Providing a number of different components for performing equivalent services, the different components being provided by different entities; and,
 - b) Inducing competition between the entities to thereby drive improvement of the components.
- 32) Apparatus for allowing users to manipulate data, the apparatus including a processing system adapted to:
- a) Provide access to one or more components, each component representing a respective service for manipulating data;
 - b) Allow user to define a combination of the components; and,
 - c) Cause the components to manipulate data in accordance with the defined combination.
- 33) Apparatus according to claim 32, the apparatus being adapted to perform the method of any one of the claims 27 to 31.
- 34) A computer program product for providing a service embodied in a component, each component corresponding to a respective service for manipulating data, the computer program product including computer executable code which when executed on a suitable processing system causes the processing system to perform the method of any one of the claims 27 to 31.
- 35) A method of providing a component embodying a service portion using a processing system, the method including:
- a) Determining a service portion to be performed;
 - b) Determining a method of performing the service portion; and,
 - c) Generating a component specification defining the service portion, the component specification including port specifications defining any information to be received or output from the respective port.
- 36) A method according to claim 35, the method including further determining a private component specification defining the method of performing the service portion.
- 37) A method according to claim 35 or claim 36, the method including providing the component specification to a processing system, the processing system being adapted to provide details of the component to users thereby allowing users to select the component for use.
- 38) A method according to any one of the claims 35 to 37, the method including defining a component server to be implemented by the processing system, the component server being adapted to generate component instances performing the service portion.
- 39) Apparatus for providing a component embodying a service portion using a processing system, apparatus including a processing system adapted to:
- a) Determine in accordance with user input commands:
 - i) A service portion to be performed;

- 63 -

- ii) A method of performing the service portion; and,
- iii) Generate a component specification defining the service portion, the component specification including port specifications defining any data to be received or output from the ports.

40) Apparatus according to claim 39, the apparatus being adapted to perform the method of any one of the claims 35 to 38.

41) A computer program product for providing a component embodying a service portion, the computer program product including computer executable code which when executed on a suitable processing system causes the processing system to perform the method of any one of the claims 35 to 38.

42) A method of providing a service portion embodied in a component using a processing system, the method including causing the processing system to:

- a) Receive a service request;
- b) Generate a respective component instance in response to the received service request;
- c) Obtain any required information; and,
- d) Perform the service portion.

43) A method according to claim 42, the method including causing the processing system to perform the service portion using at least one of:

- a) A predetermined process; and,
- b) Input commands received from an operator.

44) Apparatus for method providing a service portion embodied in a component, the apparatus including a processing system adapted to:

- a) Receive a service request;
- b) Generate a respective component instance in response to the received service request;
- c) Obtain any required information; and,
- d) Perform the service portion.

45) Apparatus according to claim 44, the apparatus being adapted to perform the method of claim 42 or claim 43.

46) A computer program product for providing a service portion embodied in a component, the computer program product including computer executable code which when executed on a suitable processing system causes the processing system to perform the method of any one of claim 42 or claim 43.